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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [ARABL](#) [EG](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA: ARAB LEAGUE PRESSING FOR RESUMPTION OF
DIPLOMATIC TALKS, AVOIDANCE OF ARMED CONFLICT

REF: STATE 200637

Classified by Minister Counselor for Economic and Political
Affairs William Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Poloff discussed reftel demarche with Arab League
Secretariat African Affairs Office Director Samir Hosny on

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December 20, urging the League to use its contacts with
Somali Islamic Courts (CIC) and Transitional Federal
Government (TFG) figures to help avoid military clashes, to
restrain extremist rhetoric, and to resume direct
negotiations. Hosni said he was in daily contact with senior
members of both parties (including CIC leader Aweys), and
that the League's message was consistent with the U.S.
demarche. Admitting the situation was precarious, Hosny
claimed credit on behalf of the League for having received
assurances from both sides not to launch armed attacks
against the other.

12. (C) Regarding resumption of Arab League-sponsored talks,
Hosny said the CIC agreed to return to the table without
preconditions, but the TFG was stalling. And, no date for
resumption of talks has been agreed. As for a venue, the
League - working with IGAD Chair Kenya - was flexible on
location, if agreed to by both sides. The CIC, he said,
preferred Yemen, Sudan, or Cairo, while the TFG preferred
Kenya (a supposed non-starter for the Courts). Egypt, Hosny
said, would host the talks if it felt meaningful progress
could be achieved. One of Egypt's main concerns with this
crisis, he volunteered, was maintaining good relations with
Ethiopia. Egypt was not prepared to provide peace-keeping
troops at this stage (requested by Kenya's Foreign Minister),
he added, unless agreed by both sides.

13. (C) The League is pressing the CIC to understand that
UNSCR 1725 is "not aimed at them," Hosny stated, but rather
designed to protect the transitional government. Since the
Courts already declared that they had no intention to attack
Baidoa or the TFG, there is no reason for them to object to
the UN resolution. Hosny said that Arab League Secretariat
staff member Zeid Al Sabban is currently in Nairobi to follow
the situation, and to liaise with the International Contact
Group and others involved in Somali affairs. If Arab
League-hosted talks resume, he said, the main focus of talks
would be interim security arrangements and power sharing.
Hosny encouraged Washington and others to pressure the TFG to
return to the negotiating table without conditions.

14. (C) MFA Somalia Desk officer Mohamed Orabi told poloff on
November 20 that Egypt is adopting a "wait-and-see" approach
to a possible CIC attack against Ethiopian forces. He
suggested that recent actions and statements by the Courts
indicated a slight retreat from their original threats to
attack Ethiopian forces. (Comment: Orabi may not be privy
to all GOE engagement on Somalia, as Egyptian Intelligence -

not the MFA - has been the primary conduit for engagement
with the Courts. End comment).
JONES